

## A Six Week Parenting Program For Child Compliance

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Child compliance is an important skill for young children to develop. It is often the focus of intervention efforts. This paper presents a six week program for professionals to use in parent training. At each week, new parenting skills are taught and utilized in real life child compliance situations. Data collection is built into the six-week program. For assistance to professionals and parents, the article presents the manual in its entirety for use.

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Compliance problems in young children are often at the heart of many parent-child difficulties. It is an area where effective treatments are available (Van Hasselt, Sisson, & Aach, 1987). Parent training procedures based on a behavioral approach incorporating antecedent and consequent components provide an empirical evidence-base for users (Cipani, 2004; Issac, 1982; O'Dell, 1974). This parent-training manual lays out a step-by-step plan for developing key skills in parents for compliance situations. Professionals can use the manual in individual parent training efforts as well as group training formats that span a six-week (or longer period). If used individually, it can be tailored to fit the individual client needs and may require more or less time than six weeks. It is recommended that the skills taught should be kept in their current sequence.

A child's compliance to simple parental commands is an important skill to develop. Isn't life more harmonious when children put their back packs up without constant reminding? What about living with children who fail to respond to your requests, time and time again? Is a child's failure to comply a satisfying state of affairs? Which family would you like to be "parent for a week": Ozzie & Harriet Nelson or the Simpson's? While you may laugh more at Bart, you certainly hope he is your neighbor's child, and not yours.

Parents are not the only beneficiaries of compliance in their children. Children who have learned to follow parental directives and commands without great distress and commotion often live happier lives, both at home and in school. In contrast, children who lack this ability often have difficulty in their daily interactions with people, particularly at school.

This six-week parental program to deal with child compliance has the following phases:

- Week 1: Set the stage for child compliance
- Week 2: Know the difference between a clear and an unclear command
- Week 3-4: Learn to use praise, time limits and "Sit & Decide"
- Week 5: How's it going?
- Week 6: The non-compliance jar

This six-week program is highly suited for young children, at preschool and early elementary ages (results are not guaranteed). In some cases, parents may be able to effectively deploy these procedures without any outside consultation. However, other parents may require technical assistance in some part(s) of the six week program in order to be effective with their particular child. I strongly encourage such parents to seek out consultation from some one trained in applied behavior analysis, particularly if they experience problems in implementing these

recommendations with their child. Such personnel can be found at the following web sites ([www.bacb.com](http://www.bacb.com) or [www.abainternational.org](http://www.abainternational.org)). If more serious mental health problems exist, a physician or other mental health professional may need to evaluate your child, prior to or during this program.

Before embarking on this six-week program, please fill out the following questionnaire (Table 1). The questionnaire asks you to rate your child's level of compliance to your commands over the prior two-month period.

**Table 1: Your Child's Base Level of  
Compliance to Parental Commands/Request**

Please rate the following six statements as each statement currently applies to your child's behavior: (1) always/all the time, (2) frequently, (3) occasionally, and (4) never/not at all). For each rating statement, place an x in the column that best fits that statement when considering your child's behavior within the last two-month period:

	Always/all the time	Frequently	Occasionally	Never/not at all
My child fails to follow through with most of my requests				
I find myself repeating the request multiple times				
I get tired of asking my child to comply with requests				
I have to scream at him/her to get compliance				
I dread compliance situations				
My child is extremely non-compliant				

**Week 1: Set the Stage for Child Compliance**

The case of child non-compliance:

Parent: "Geraldo please put your raincoat on. It's beginning to rain and I don't want you to get your clothes wet and get sick."

Geraldo: "I won't get sick mom. I'm taking my vitamins in the morning. That will help me."

Parent: "Geraldo, don't walk out that door without your raincoat on. Now I am serious and I mean it. If you walk out that door, I'm going to *ground* you."

Geraldo: (*Ignores parent and walks out the door.*)

Parent: "Geraldo, what did I tell you? Are you deaf? You don't listen to me. Now just because of that, when you come back in from playing, your going to have a talk with your father when he gets home."

Geraldo: (*Continues to ignore parent.*)

Parent: "That boy he never listens. He is just like his dad. Sometimes I think I have to tie him up to get him to listen to me (in a joking manner)."

If this sounds familiar to you, you are not alone in the world. To encounter such noncompliance on a daily (maybe hourly) basis must be extremely frustrating. But it doesn't need to be that way! You can reduce your frustration and your child's failure to follow your directions by following this six-week program. While results are never guaranteed, this approach has been successful in many families that I have worked with. In this first week, you will learn two critical parenting behaviors. I believe these two critical behaviors set the stage for compliance. They are:

- (1) Get close to the child (i.e. physical proximity)
- (2) Get the child's attention (i.e. face to face orientation)

Get close. Before you open your mouth to issue the request/command, get within close physical proximity to your child. I recommend the one arm's distance rule, i.e., get within one arm's distance of him or her. Young children listen best when an adult is in close proximity. Conversely, not being close to the child and failing to get their attention often leads to the child not following through with your instruction or direction. Think about it. If you are 20 feet away, when you ask Bobby, "Pick up your socks," how likely is it that you will close the distance if your request is met with inaction? Believe it or not, your child may have figured that out. He decides that the best strategy is to act as if he is hearing- impaired.

Get the child's attention. Therefore, the first step involves you getting physically close to the child before issuing the request. Second, get the child's attention before telling him (or her) what to do. For young children, you may need to bend down to their eye level so that face-to-face orientation can occur. This may be a little known fact, but one has to attend to an instruction (hear it) before one can follow it (at least on this planet). Ask yourself this question, "How successful have I been in getting my child to follow through with an instruction when s/he is busy watching TV, or listening to a CD?" I have seen exasperated parents continue talking while the child is watching cartoons. At the end of the long-winded request, the parent finishes with, "Did you hear that?" which is then followed by, "What?" Or in current jargon, but same intent, "Whatever!"

Attention is a precursor to compliance. Make sure you have the child's attention even if it means disengaging him from the present activity and saying, "Geraldo, look at me!" The

command should not be given unless you have the child face-to-face. In the previous scenario, Geraldo's mom would go up to him (close proximity) as she noticed he was headed outside, block the doorway, and say, "Geraldo look at me." Then she would state (after he looks at her), "Please put your raincoat on before going outside."

Monitor these two behaviors whenever you make requests of your child. After each request/command, ask yourself these questions. Did I get close? Did I get my child's attention before issuing the command? I would like you to keep written records of your progress with respect to these two critical parenting behaviors for this initial week of the program.

Table 2 provides an illustration of a filled out data sheet for a hypothetical parent. The written record allows this parent to see how well she is doing on this week's assignment, i.e., getting close and getting their child's attention before issuing the command. As you can see in the first column, the time and the command given, is written verbatim. In the second column, the parent merely indicates whether she was close to the child when the command was given (i.e., one arm's length distance). In the third column, the parent indicates if the child's attention was obtained prior to giving the command (answer yes or no). In the last column, the parent indicates whether the child complied by putting a "C" in that row, or did not comply by putting an "NC." In this particular hypothetical case, the child complied with three commands and did not comply with two commands for a compliance ratio of 3/5 compliance (60%).

**Table 2: Recording Command/Request  
Proximity and Attention**

**Date:** 4-12 **Time Period of Recording:** 3-6 PM

Time	Command Given	Was I Close? (Yes/No)	Get child's Attention? (Yes/No)	Compliance (C) or Non-Compliance (NC)
3:10	Put your backpack up	No	No	NC
3:10	Put your backpack up	Yes	Yes	C
3:25	Come to table for snack	Yes	Yes	C
3:30	Put your paper cup in garbage can	Yes	Yes	C
4:10	Please close door (as she went outside)	No	No	NC

**Total for Compliance (C):** 3

**Total for Non-Compliance (NC):** 2

**Ratio of compliance/non-compliance:** 3/5 = 60% compliance

*Homework Assignment Week 1: Study the example above illustrating the use of this data recording form. During compliance situations, focus on these two critical parenting behaviors before you give a command. Use Table 3 below and record your command/request verbatim and fill out the remaining columns. If you cannot keep track of your commands across an entire day, then designate a time period each day, e.g., 3-6 PM, when you will log your recordings for each command. Try to log this information as soon after giving the command as possible. Strive to get better each day. (Note: there are more blank forms in the back of this manual)*

**Table 3: Recording Command/Request**  
Proximity and Attention

Date: \_\_\_\_ Time Period of Recording:

Time	Command Given	Was I Close? (Yes/No)	Get child's Attention? (Yes/No)	Compliance (C) or Non-Compliance (NC)

**Total for Compliance (C):**

**Total for Non-Compliance (NC):**

**Ratio of compliance/non-compliance:**

Table 4 provides an illustration of how to record the summary data (derived from the information in previous Table). For each day, count the total number of compliance recordings and the number of non-compliance recordings. To determine the child's compliance ration, divide the number of compliance recordings by the total. This summary data sheet (Table 5) is to be filled in by you after the first week's data.

**Table 4: Summary Data Sheet  
Sample**

Date	Compliance	Non-Compliance	% Compliance
3-11	5	10	5/15 = 33%
3-12	3	7	3/7 = 30%
3-13	6	4	6/10 = 60%

**Table 5: Summary Data Sheet**

Date	Compliance	Non-Compliance	% Compliance

**Week 2: Know the Difference Between  
a Clear and Unclear Command**

Is this a command, a language lesson, or a tarot card reading of the future?

“Sherrie, what are you doing? How many times do I have to tell you to respect property? Wouldn’t it be nice if you would place your feet on the floor, not on the coffee table? That is why they named it a coffee table. Do you suppose that if they meant for feet to be placed there, it might have been called a foot tray? Girl, I hate to see you when you’re older. If you’re going to treat your property that way, nobody is going to want to live with you. You’re going to live by yourself and be unhappy, so please learn how to respect furniture.”

What is wrong with the above scenario? The parent wanted her daughter to take her feet off the coffee table and place them on the floor. If that is what you want; do not beat around the bush. Just state it. In week two, you are going to learn the difference between a clear, concise command and an ambiguous, long-winded, request. Further you will also learn that a choice and a command are incompatible. What is a clear and concise command? Table 6 presents several examples that contrast clear, concise commands with ambiguous commands.

**Table 6: Quality of Command/Request**

<u>Column A: Clear &amp; Concise</u>	<u>Column B: Ambiguous</u>
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1. "Please pick up your shoes."	"Please pick up your shoes, they are smelling up the place."
2. "Begin your homework within 1 minute."	"Come on, get yourself prepared to do your homework. You don't want to be a slacker."
3. "Pick up all the dirty clothes on the floor and put them in the hamper."	"Clean up before this place gets condemned."

Look at the first command; "Please pick up your shoes." How is that different from, "Please pick up your shoes, they are smelling up the place." (Let's assume that they really are smelly). If the parent in column B had stopped with the first part of the command, s/he would have issued a clear command. However the information on how the sneakers are affecting the environment (i.e., they are smelling up the place) went too far.

Am I implying it is wrong to throw in a science lesson along with requesting a child to pick up her sneakers? Frankly, "Yes." What's wrong with the additional information is that it invites an argument. It allows the child to retort to your comment by saying, "No, they're not smelling up the place," or "I don't smell anything" and subsequently the argument ensues. Instead of gaining compliance from the child, you now have to take on the role of an "olfactory (smell) expert."

I am sure a number of you are nodding your head "yes," in recollecting what transpires with your child. Believe me you are not alone! I have been in many homes and have seen this phenomenon countless times. In fact many parents who have compliance problems often complain of their child's arguing behavior. When they meet me, they will start with the following: "Dr. Cipani, what can we do. Our child always argues with us. He is acting like a pre-law major and he is only in third grade." I do not know about his precocious nature in regards to a legal career, but I can tell you that compliance situations are generally at the heart of the arguing problem.

Guess when the child argues with his parents? Is it over a discussion of the day's current events? No. Is it when they are discussing whether Florida State will beat University of Miami in football this year? No. They argue when they are asked to do something. Why do they argue? They argue because the parents give them a rationale for why they should do something. For many of these kids, that is like setting up a big bull's eye target. What is inevitable is they will argue with the rationale. Look at the example above, "Begin your homework within one minute." Clear and to the point. What are you to do? Homework. When should you commence? Within one minute.

Now look at column B, "Come on, get yourself prepared to do your homework. You don't want to be a slacker." What's wrong with that? Two things. First, the word "prepared." What do you do when you prepare? The child could sit there, daydream, and claim he is mentally preparing himself to do his homework. Second, while the last comment might get you a stand up comedy routine at the local bar, it is not good for child interactions. Can you guess what the child might retort with? You guessed it. "I like being a slacker." or "Dad, what is a slacker? Do they make lots of money?" Now what is your rebuttal? I will give you a clue. Continuing this will only become more ludicrous. For a father-son comedy act on the Tonight Show: great. But if you want compliance, stick to the facts!

Examine example number three: “Pick up all the dirty clothes on the floor in your room and put them in the hamper.” This is a clear command identifying what behavior is expected, i.e., picking up the dirty clothes from the floor and putting them in the hamper. Now look at the unclear command, “Clean up before this place gets condemned.” What behavior is expected? Clean up of what? In contrast to the clear command, clean up your room could mean a whole host of things. Also, by remarking that the place could be condemned, you open yourself up to the possibility of a geo-political discussion on the role of county and state government in family life. Meanwhile the dirty clothes are still on the floor. While that might be a nice topic for some family evening, its development as a discussion topic at this point in time is disastrous for child compliance.

For some of you, I know it will be hard to just stick to the basics during compliance situations with your child. One of the families I consulted with was very impressed with the results we were obtaining on their foster child’s level of compliance. But the mother remarked, “You know, in the parenting classes we are asked to attend, they tell us to do the opposite. If your child does not comply with your request, tell him why s/he should. In other words, give them a rationale for compliance.” While that may seem to be the reasonable thing to do, it is often contra-indicated when dealing with non-compliant children. If you have compliance problems with your child and you believe that it was “best practice” to always provide a rationale, you now know what you must change.

One other problem some parents have is they do not issue commands, but state requests in the form of a choice. For example, “would you like to put your glass in the sink” is a choice, not a command. It implies a preference. In contrast, “put your glass in the sink, please!” clarifies the situation. This is a request requiring compliance. It is great for children to be able to make choices. Just be clear in your own mind when you are OK with a choice from them, and when you desire compliance. Don’t get the two confused.

Table 7 allows you to monitor your performance in making clear concise commands. For each command you give (either collecting this information part of the day or the whole day), write down the time of day and the command you gave, verbatim. After you have written it down, evaluate whether it was clear and concise. If it wasn’t clear and concise, then write what would have been a clear and concise command in the last column, as sort of an immediate correction of your behavior. This will help you teach or perhaps, re-teach yourself, how to be more exact in what it is you are requesting of your child.

**Table 7: Log of Specific Commands Given**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Command (Verbatim)</b>	<b>Clear &amp; Concise Form</b>



*Homework Assignment Week 2: Continue collecting data on the rate of compliance using Table 3 and the summary sheet found on Table 5. Also, for 2-3 days this week, continue using Table 7 to monitor your presentation of clear commands. When in a compliance situation, you should now be getting better at getting close to your child, getting their attention and then issuing a clear, concise, command. Try to improve each day. Rome was not built in a day. But once it was built it stood for centuries. Have patience and persistence.*

### **Weeks 3 & 4: Learn to Use Praise, Time Limits, & “Sit and Decide”**

Before learning how to praise, set time limits and use ““Sit and Decide”” as a consequence for non-compliance, please review your data from the previous two weeks. If you have learned the lessons from weeks one and two, you are now engaging in a compliance repertoire that many parents report makes a big difference in their child’s compliance. Review your child’s rate of compliance and non-compliance each day to stay abreast of their progress. It might also be helpful to fill out again the interview questions listed in Table 1, assessing your child’s compliance to parental commands and requests for the last two weeks. Compare it with the previously completed questionnaire. Has there been progress? Below is the questionnaire reprinted for your convenience.

**Table 8: Your Child’s Compliance to Parental Commands/Request-Assessment after first Two Weeks**

Please rate the following six statements as each statement currently applies to your child’s behavior: (1) always/all the time, (2) frequently, (3) occasionally, and (4) never/not at all). For each rating statement, place an x in the column that best fits that statement when considering your child’s behavior within the last two-week period (i.e., since starting the 6-week program):

	Always/all the time	Frequently	Occasionally	Never/not at all
My child fails to follow through with most of my requests				
I find myself repeating the request multiple times				
I get tired of asking my child to comply with requests				
I dread compliance situations				
My child is extremely non-compliant				

Now you are ready to utilize a few more tools to gain greater levels of child compliance. First, praise your child when s/he attends to your instruction and initiates compliance. Too often, and sadly enough, many people take compliance for granted. When your child listens attentively to your request, thank them for listening. Further, as they comply with your request provide more praise. Praising young children works effectively in the beginning, by generating their interest and motivation in following your request. While it is not the whole ball of wax, it is certainly helpful in a small but meaningful way. Continue praising compliant behaviors and notice the difference.

Second, learn how to set time limits. Specify the time period in which the child should initiate compliant behavior. For example, if I asked a child, “please go and get your socks out of the drawer and bring them here,” at what point should she initiate compliance? To shape up responding quickly to your first command (as opposed to having to repeat it multiple times), you have to delineate a time requirement. Let’s look at that command again in a different light, “Sarah please get your socks and bring them here. You need to move by the count of four, 1-2-3-4.” If Sarah has initiated movement prior to me getting to four then we have compliant behavior (provided she follows through with getting the socks). However, if she is still sitting there when I hit four, then non-compliance has occurred. The point of non-compliance is very important to establish so the child knows when you expect compliance and when noncompliance has begun.

You will also use a technique I call “Sit and Decide” until you’re ready. The “Sit and Decide” procedure is used when the child fails to initiate compliance. To reiterate, it is important to initiate the count procedure when giving a command. At the point where the child has failed to initiate, the parent implements the following procedures comprising “Sit and Decide”. Contingent on non-compliance to the command, the parent immediately escorts the child to the “Sit and Decide” chair. The child stays in the chair until s/he volunteers to comply with the request. When the child has decided to comply s/he is released from the “Sit and Decide” chair to initiate compliance with the request. If compliance occurs subsequent to “Sit and Decide” then praise is withheld. If compliance is obtained prior to “Sit and Decide”, then praise and reinforce. The following hypothetical scenario between a parent and her six- year old son illustrates the “sit and decide” procedure while he is watching TV.

Parent: Please take your shoes that are on the floor and put them in the closet. (begins counting to five)

Barry: Later Mom, I am watching Kojak and it’s the first show.

Parent: (with no movement on the part of Barry, grabbing him by the hand) OK you can sit here until you decide to comply with my request (places Barry in sit and decide chair)

Barry: OK. I will put them away after I am done watching Kojak.

Parent: Keep deciding (one minute passes)

Parent: Are you ready to put your shoes away?

Barry: OK (gets up and moves toward shoes)

Parent: Thank you for cleaning up after yourself. When they are in the closet, I will turn the TV back on.

In the above example, note the progression. First, the parent did not give Barry an explanation as to why he should pick up his shoes. She simply stated the command in clear and concise form. If she had said, “I need you to move them before you forget and then I have to pick them up like always,” what would have been the result? You guessed it. An argument over the son’s reliability in following through on requests. When Barry looked like he was ready to comply, his mom asked him, “Are you ready to put your shoes away?” When he indicated he was, he was allowed to leave the “sit and decide” chair and comply with this request. Had non-compliance occurred at any point subsequent to leaving the chair, Barry’s mom would have gone right back to square 1, Barry in the “Sit and Decide” chair. Eventually Barry complies, either after a short or long stay in the “sit and decide” chair. Barry decides whether his stay in the chair will be short or long. He can terminate his stay when he decides to comply with the prior parental request.

What is the incentive for the child to comply with “Sit and Decide?” If your child was previously thinking that s/he could just “wait you out,” by not complying, that will no longer happen while s/he watches TV (or engages in some other pleasurable activity). Rather, your child will now have to sit (and decide) in a chair removed from the favored activities. And after all that sitting and deciding, what is the result? Your child has to perform the task anyway! Deciding not to comply with your request now has the effect of postponing fun activities while one sits in the “sit and decide” chair.

The “sit and decide” procedure has the following requirements:

1. The sit and decide chair should be in one place in the house, away from the TV, toys and other fun activities.
2. The parent is in the immediate vicinity supervising the child when the child is in the “sit and decide” chair.
3. Unlike time out, sit and decide is terminated when the child is ready to comply with the request given (and follows through).
4. It is OK to check with younger children every so often to see if they are ready to comply (e.g., “Are you ready to \_\_\_\_.”). If the child indicates the intent to comply (verbal or gesture), s/he is released from the chair to comply with original request.
5. “Sit and decide” is re-instated at any point non-compliance occurs, with the previous activity resuming only after complete compliance with the request is obtained.
6. If the command given was to desist in some activity, and the child fails to comply, the child sits in the chair for a short period of time (one minute per year of age is what many people use). The child may leave the chair after this time period when she agrees not to do the behavior or activity again (after the time period has elapsed).

If you experience problems in implementing these steps in the “sit and decide” procedure, you may need some technical assistance in deploying this component. Again, I suggest seeking out consultation from personnel trained in applied behavior analysis. Behavior analysts in your area may be located by logging on to the following web sites: [www.bacb.com](http://www.bacb.com) or [www.abainternational.org](http://www.abainternational.org). Again, if more serious mental health problems exist, a physician or other mental health professional may need to evaluate your child, prior to or during this program.

During weeks 3 and 4, use the following data sheet to record compliance, non-compliance as well as the number of times you had to use sit and decide (should usually equal the number of non-compliant acts). The sample is provided first, followed by the data sheet for you.

Table 9: Sample Intervention Data-  
Praise, Time limits, and “Sit and Decide”

Date	Number of Compliant Behaviors	Number of Non-compliant Behaviors	Compliance Ratio	Number of “Sit and Decides”
6-9	11111	111	5/8	111
6-10	11111111	111	8/11	111
6-11	111111111111	1111	12/16 = 75%	1111

Table 9: Intervention Data-  
Praise, Time limits, and “Sit and Decide”

Date	Number of Compliant Behaviors	Number of Non-compliant Behaviors	Compliance Ratio	Number of “Sit and Decides”

*Homework Assignment for weeks 3 & 4: Fill out the summary data sheets for weeks three and four. You can now record compliance and non-compliance on the form above (table 9). Use praise and time limits for each compliance situation, in addition to the potential use of “Sit and Decide.” If your child does not initiate movement within a count of five, then implement the sit and decide procedure. Of course, don’t forget to continue the skills you learned in weeks 1 and 2.*

### Week 5: How’s It Going?

Examine the rates of compliance and non-compliance for weeks three and four against what you were getting from week one and two. Furthermore, fill out the inventory that was listed

on the first page in a general sense for the last two weeks to see if substantial improvements have occurred (provided below).

**Table 9: Your Child's Compliance to Parental Commands/Request-Assessment after first Four Weeks**

Please rate the following six statements as each statement currently applies to your child's behavior: (1) always/all the time, (2) frequently, (3) occasionally, and (4) never/not at all. For each rating statement, place an x in the column that best fits that statement when considering your child's behavior within the last two-week period:

	Always/all the time	Frequently	Occasionally	Never/not at all
My child fails to follow through with most of my requests				
I find myself repeating the request multiple times				
I get tired of asking my child to comply with requests				
I dread compliance situations				
My child is extremely non-compliant				

If you are happy with your child's current level of compliance then maybe all you need to do is to continue using these procedures taught in the first four weeks of this program. However, if you need more of an effect on child compliance, proceed to week 6. A powerful tool will be offered to shape up even more child compliant behavior.

### **Week 6: The Non-compliance jar**

Since the first week, about how much of an improvement has occurred in your child's compliance to commands/requests? Place an "X" in the appropriate column.

**Table 10: Magnitude of Change in Child Compliance**

No Improvement	Modest Improvement	Sufficient Improvement	Dramatic Improvement

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Of course you are to continue all the procedures you have learned in previous weeks. For some of you, the gains obtained to this point may be sufficient, without the need for the next tool. For others, you may still want a little better control over your child's compliance. A new component called the non-compliance jar, will be the vehicle. The non-compliance jar establishes an incentive for the young child or adolescent to comply with parental requests or commands given over a period of time. Each time a child fails to comply, in addition to "Sit and Decide" the parent also fines the child a penny or marble and removes such from the non-compliance jar. If a child loses a certain number of pennies or marbles then he or she loses access to a reinforcer that is established a priori. You may need the help of a certified behavior analyst to help you with this part of the program (contact [www.bacb.com](http://www.bacb.com) or [www.abainternational.org](http://www.abainternational.org)).

Let's take a hypothetical case of John and his mother, Mrs. Wrap. Let's say John is not allowed to lose more than four points from acts of non-compliance during the day. This is called the daily behavioral goal. I know that sounds technical, but all it really means is that John can have up to four acts of non-compliance in a given day and we would consider that as having reached the goal (for that day). If he has five or more acts of non-compliance, he did not achieve his daily behavioral goal. As a result, he loses the designated reinforcer for that day. Five or more acts constitute an unacceptable level of non-compliance for the day.

As Mrs. Wrap learned in week one, before making a request of John, she gets close to him and gets his attention. When Mrs. Wrap asks John to do something, she presents a clear and concise command. She also begins to count aloud to five. If John initiates compliance prior to her reaching the count of five, she praises him. If he does not move, she places him in the "sit and decide" chair. She also removes a penny in the non-compliance jar (which has six pennies at the start of the day), indicating non-compliance. Subsequent to these two procedures, John eventually volunteers to perform the request, verbally indicating he is ready to comply. He is allowed to then leave the sit and decide chair and initiate compliance. At the end of the day, Mrs. Wrap examines the non-compliance jar. If any pennies are left, John met his daily behavioral goal for that day. However, if the jar is empty, then he did not reach his goal and the designated privilege is not accessed that day. Each day, John can earn (or not earn) the designated privilege as reinforcement for achieving his daily behavioral goal.

The use of privileges each day as reinforcement for achieving the daily behavioral goal makes John learn to acquire more self-control around compliance situations. As John gets closer to exceeding the daily behavioral goal, he will think twice before he decides to ignore his parent's request. His level of motivation to comply with parental requests becomes stronger. Listed below are 3 hypothetical cases of the non-compliance jar program for three children and their families. Note that the designated privilege is some event or activity that is available each day (and thus can be bestowed or removed each day).

#### **Case 1: Alicia – 6 years old**

Previous Data: Over weeks 4 and 5, Alicia had between 7-10 non-compliant acts per day

Reinforcer to be Earned: half hour later bedtime

Behavioral Standard for Reinforcement (# non-compliant acts): 7 or less

Scenario: If Alicia has three or less acts of non-compliance in a given day, she can go to bed half an hour past her usual time. If she has more than three acts of non-compliance, she goes to bed at her regular time.

When Alicia has been successful with her daily behavioral goal for seven consecutive days, the daily behavioral goal will be reduced to 6 or less acts of non-compliance.

Non-compliance jar: Each day, the jar starts with eight pennies. When all the pennies are removed (for acts of non-compliance), the empty jar signifies that the daily behavioral goal was not met, and the day's privilege is withdrawn.

### Case 2: Aaron – 4 years old

Previous Data: Over weeks 4 and 5, Aaron had between 1-2 non-compliant acts per day

Reinforcer to be Earned: after dinner cartoon privileges

Behavioral Standard for Reinforcement (# non-compliant acts): 1 or less

Scenario: If Aaron has zero or one act of non-compliance when dinner is finished, he can watch his favorite cartoons that evening. If he has more than one, he loses cartoon privileges for that evening.

Non-compliance jar: Each day, the jar starts with two chips. When both are removed, the empty jar signifies that the daily behavioral goal was not met, and the day's privilege is withdrawn.

### Case 3: Lorenzo – 7 years old

Previous Data: Over weeks 4 and 5, Lorenzo had between 6-11 non-compliant acts per day

Reinforcer to be Earned: one hour with friends playing outside in the backyard after dinner

Behavioral Standard for Reinforcement (# non-compliant acts): 7 or less

Scenario: If Lorenzo has seven or less acts of non-compliance in a given day, he can play with his friends after dinner for one hour. If he has more than seven, he loses that privilege and must stay inside.

When Lorenzo has been successful with his daily behavioral goal for seven consecutive days, the daily behavioral goal will be reduced to 6 or less acts of non-compliance.

Non-compliance jar: Each day, the jar starts with eight pennies. When all the pennies are removed (for acts of non-compliance), the empty jar signifies that the daily behavioral goal was not met, and the day's privilege is withdrawn.

You will have to determine if your child is old enough to understand this component. For younger children who cannot count, putting a designated number of pennies in the jar and then removing them makes it easier for them to comprehend the nature of the fine for non-compliance. When the jar is empty, they lost access to the reinforcer for that day. For all children, seeing the jar and the status of pennies or chips in the jar, keeps them apprised of their progress throughout the day with the daily behavioral goal.

*Homework Assignment: Implement a non-compliance jar program for a target number of noncompliant acts over the next several weeks. Select a reasonable daily behavioral goal based on your child's current level of progress. If you need help with this decision, please consult a certified behavior analyst or the book, "Helping Parents Help their Kids: A Clinical Guide to Six Child Problem Behaviors," to aide you in selecting an appropriate standard. Use the data sheet provided below to continue collecting data on the frequency of compliance/ non-compliance, as well as the number of "sit and decide" procedures that were used. Also indicate for each day whether the behavioral standard was met and reinforcement was delivered.*

**Table 11: Intervention Data – Week 6**

Date	Number of Compliant Behaviors	Number of Non-compliant Behaviors	Compliance Ratio	Number of "Sit and Decides"	Goal Met?


With these new tools, you are now prepared to gain and maintain greater levels of child compliance. Continue using these tools. The checklist below can be posted for your easy review.

**Table 13: Nine Procedures for Compliance Situations**

- \_\_\_ 1. Get within arm's distance of the child.
- \_\_\_ 2. Get the child's attention (verbal directive such as "Johnny, look at me!") and simultaneously gently hold hand or arm.
- \_\_\_ 3. Issue a clear, concise command to the child in close proximity (once) and delineates time requirement for initiation of compliance.
- \_\_\_ 4. Praise initiation of compliance if it occurs within time limit.
- \_\_\_ 5. Places child in "sit and decide" at the point where non-compliance has occurred and remove a marble or penny from the non-compliance jar.
- \_\_\_ 6. When child agrees to comply, release him or her from "sit and decide" chair to complete your request
- \_\_\_ 7. "Sit and decide" is re-initiated for any non-compliance that re-occurs while following through with your original request
- \_\_\_ 8. When the child has complied with the request, praise the child for compliance.
- \_\_\_ 9. If the child reaches the acceptable level for non-compliance that day, provide him or her with the reinforcer or incentive earned. If they did not, remove the privilege and state that tomorrow they have another opportunity to earn.

Let us return to Geraldo and his mother. This is how the scenario might look now, after Geraldo's mother becomes wise in the ways of the behavioral approach.

Geraldo: (Begins to walk out). "I am going out Mom."

Parent: (*Walks over to Geraldo and gets within arm's distance of him.*)

"Geraldo, Look at me." (*Geraldo looks directly at her and she thanks him for his attention*) "Geraldo please put your raincoat on, it is in the closet. I need you to get your raincoat by the count of ten.

Geraldo: "I don't need it mom. I will be OK!"

Parent: "Geraldo, since you have decided not to follow my instructions you can "sit and decide" until you are ready to follow my instructions. (*She places him in sit and decide chair.*). "Also, I will take a marble from the non-compliance jar since you did not follow my direction. You now have only two left in there today. (daily behavioral goal is five).

Geraldo: "But I don't like raincoats, they are for children. I am all grown up."

Parent: (*ignore him until he is ready to comply*)



Geraldo: (*After 1 minute in sit and decide chair.*) “OK, I am ready to put on my raincoat.”

Parent: “OK, good. You may get up and put on your raincoat. I will count to ten again.”

Geraldo: (Complies with direction and then heads out the door.)

Parent: “Thank you for listening. You have thirty minutes left to play outside before dinner.”

### Conclusion

Compliance is a critical element leading to children referral (Richman & Wacker, 2001). Behavior analysts have created programs to increase compliance in children. The above program is based on well-established principles to build compliance. The above is not a panacea for all behavior problems and users should contact a local professional if the program is not working.

### Appendices- Extra Forms

#### **Your Child's Level of Compliance to Parental Commands/Request**

Please rate the following six statements as each statement currently applies to your child's behavior: (1) always/all the time, (2) frequently, (3) occasionally, and (4) never/not at all). For each rating statement, place an x in the column that best fits that statement when considering your child's behavior within the last rating period:

	Always/all the time	Frequently	Occasionally	Never/not at all
My child fails to follow through with most of my requests				
I find myself repeating the request multiple times				
I get tired of asking my child to comply with requests				
I have to scream at him/her to get compliance				
I dread compliance situations				
My child is				

extremely non-compliant				
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**Week 2**  
**Recording Command/Request**  
Proximity and Attention

Date: \_\_\_\_ Time Period of Recording:

Time	Command Given	Was I Close? (Yes/No)	Get child's Attention? (Yes/No)	Compliance (C) or Non-Compliance (NC)

**Week 2**  
**Summary Data Sheet**

Date	Compliance	Non-Compliance	% Compliance

Weeks 3 & 6  
Intervention Data-  
Praise, Time limits, and "Sit and Decide"

Date	Number of Compliant Behaviors	Number of Non-compliant Behaviors	Compliance Ratio	Number of "Sit and Decides"

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